

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original) A coupling element for the combining of at least two elongate lamps with in each case two ends, the coupling element having a continuous receptacle area which is provided for receiving an end of each lamp, which receptacle area comprises a reflector.
2. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 1, which is provided for receiving lamps with a tubular lamp vessel, the receptacle area being adapted to the tubular curvature of the outer side of the lamp vessel to be received.
3. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 2, the receptacle area being realized by the inner area of a half-shell.
4. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 2, the receptacle area being realized by a hole in the coupling element.
5. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 2, the receptacle area being realized by the inner area of a hollow cylinder.

6. (currently amended) The coupling element as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, the reflector being realized by a reflective area.
7. (currently amended) The coupling element as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, the reflector being realized by a diffusely reflective area.
8. (currently amended) The coupling element as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, the reflector being realized by a reflective foil arranged on the receptacle area.
9. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 1, the coupling element being developed as a lamp base.
10. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 1, the coupling element being provided with electrical contacts.
11. (currently amended) The coupling element as claimed in claim 9 [[or 10]], the coupling element being provided with terminals for an electrical power supply voltage.
12. (currently amended) The coupling element as claimed in claim 9 [[or 10]], the coupling element having means for mounting on a lamp carrier.
13. (original) The coupling element as claimed in claim 1, the coupling element being in two parts.

14. (currently amended) An illumination system having at least two elongate lamps and at least one coupling element having the features of ~~one of claims 1 to 13~~ claim 1, a respective end of the at least two lamps being arranged in the at least one coupling element.
15. (original) The illumination system as claimed in claim 14, the end sides of the at least two lamps being arranged within the coupling element as near as possible to one another without touching one another.
16. (original) The illumination system as claimed in claim 15, the end sides of the at least two lamps being arranged within the coupling element with a mutual distance of approximately $a = 1 \text{ mm}$.
17. (original) The illumination system as claimed in claim 14, the coupling element having a stop, which defines a minimum mutual distance between the end sides of the two lamps.
18. (original) The illumination system as claimed in claim 14, the at least two lamps being aperture lamps.
19. (original) The illumination system as claimed in claim 14, the at least two lamps being dielectrically impeded discharge lamps.
20. (currently amended) The illumination system as claimed in ~~one of claims 14 to 19~~ claim 14, at least one

first lamp being provided with a respective coupling element at its two ends, in which coupling elements is arranged, in turn, a respective end of a second and a third lamp, and the electrodes of the first lamp being connected to the electrodes of the second lamp via the electrical contacts of a coupling element.